

# COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



## **NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release  
July 25, 2006

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### **Termites in Trailers? Formaldehyde Gas?** **Davis Seeks Answers on More FEMA Trailer Follies**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) today sent a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff seeking more information on reports that surplus FEMA trailers have now been infested by termites and that other trailers are giving off the odor of formaldehyde gas.

The letter also seeks updated information on the number and location of manufactured homes and/or travel trailers that the Federal Emergency Management Agency purchased after Hurricane Katrina but never put to use. FEMA is part of the Homeland Security Department.

“It’s bad enough FEMA bought so many extra trailers that they were relegated to storage sites across the country,” Davis said. “But now the trailers in surplus are at risk for being ruined by termites, and the ones in use may be endangering the health of their occupants. What exactly is going on here?”

“I always hoped FEMA would find residents for the surplus trailers, but this isn’t what I had in mind.” Davis said.

Davis has called a hearing of the full Government Reform Committee for Thursday to look into the organizational weaknesses of the Homeland Security acquisition system. The hearing will be held in Rayburn Room 2154 at 10 a.m.

The full text of Davis’s letter to Chertoff follows:

July 25, 2006

The Honorable Michael Chertoff  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

As part of the Committee on Government Reform's continuing oversight of issues relating to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts, we would like to request information on the manufactured homes and travel trailers purchased by the Federal government in the aftermath of Katrina.

Please provide the following information to the Committee by August 8, 2006.

1. It has been reported that in the wake of Katrina, FEMA over-purchased manufactured homes and/or travel trailers. These surplus homes are currently in storage at 11 sites throughout the country. Please identify the number and location of all homes currently in storage. Additionally, please provide the Committee with the estimated total cost of storing these homes during 2006.
2. Two DHS officials have advised my staff that termites may have infested the manufactured homes or travel trailers currently in storage. I am advised the presence of termites has been confirmed by the Department. Is this true? If so, please identify the remedial measures FEMA has undertaken to ensure that a widespread termite problem does not infest these homes?
3. My staff advises me, and news reports confirm, that many of the FEMA travel trailers give off a strong odor of formaldehyde gas. This gas, which may be toxic, poses a serious risk to its inhabitants. What has FEMA done to date to investigate the source of the strong odor emanating from many travel trailers? What have you learned and what remedial measures have been put in place to ensure that nobody is harmed by toxic gas in these travel trailers?

In addition, I ask that you make your staff available to brief Committee staff on these issues at such time that is requested.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these important questions.

Sincerely,

Tom Davis  
Chairman

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